REMARKS

Claims 1-81 were rejected in an Office Action dated December 13, 2005. Claims 1, 48, 56, and 73 have been amended; claims 6, 63, and 75 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein; claim 82 has been added. Support for the amendments may be found in the "Detailed Description of the Invention"; no new subject matter is deemed to be added by the claim amendments. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the following remarks.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §102

Claims 1-7, 11-14, 18-29, 33-35, 39-49, 52-58, and 61-81 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by "Hisano" (US Publication No. 2003/0003290). Applicant believes the following remarks and the claim amendments overcome the rejection to the claims.

Applicant asserts that Hisano teaches sealing material in the form of a tape comprising layers of ePTFE. Form-in-place gaskets made from this tape are installed so that the layers that make up the ePTFE tape are oriented perpendicularly to the fluid leak path and sealing surfaces. See, for example, Figure 4, where the layers of ePTFE are arranged perpendicularly to the leak path of fluid. See also, for example Figs. 5, 6, 7, 10 where adhesive used to hold the tape in place on the sealing surface during installation is placed on the laminate side surface of the sealing tape material. Thus, the upper and lower surfaces of the ePTFE tape are oriented perpendicularly to the sealing surfaces of the gasket, and laminate side surfaces are parallel to the sealing surface. At column 4, paragraph 0047, it is stated that because the ePTFE films are laminated perpendicularly to the direction in which fluid leaks, layers for preventing fluid penetration can be interposed between layers of the laminate. The instantly claimed invention has several elements which are distinct from the disclosure of Hisano.

For example, in independent claims 1, 27, 48, and 73, of the instant invention and the claims dependent thereon, in contrast to Hisano, the plane of expansion of the ePTFE tape is substantially parallel to upper and lower gasket sealing surfaces. For example, Figure 1a (also see page 9) illustrates a cross section of a multilayer gasket of the present invention where the ePTFE tape comprises upper and lower tape surfaces 16 that correspond to upper and lower gasket surfaces; side surfaces 18 extend between the upper and lower

tape surfaces or upper and lower layers of a multilayer laminate tape (see also page 12, starting at line 28). In claims 27, 48, and 73 of the instantly claimed invention, it is claimed that the upper and lower tape layers, or the plane of expansion of at least one ePTFE tape, is in the x-y plane of the gasket; thus, the plane of expansion of the ePTFE is substantially parallel to the sealing surfaces of the gasket (see Figure 5 and the specification, for example, page 9-10 of the instant application). This is clearly distinguishable from Hisano where upper and lower tape surfaces, or the plane of expansion of ePTFE, are perpendicular to the sealing surfaces.

Further, claims 1 and 56, for example, comprise the element of an ePTFE tape wound continuously for at least two windings around an inner periphery of a gasket. Sealing material of Hisano has no continuous windings of an ePTFE tape for at least two windings around the inner periphery of a gasket for reasons discussed in detail below with regard to method claims.

Specifically with regard to claims for a method of forming a gasket of claims 48, 56 and 73, Applicant strongly disagrees that the method is disclosed by Hisano. Hisano teaches forming a tape for a form-in-place gasket having layers that differ in orientation from the present invention as noted above. Additionally, the method of Hisano discloses layers of ePTFE which may be wrapped around a mandrel with layers of other materials, such as fluid penetration resistant layers, interposed between these layers. This layered form is removed from the mandrel and cut to form a flat sheet for cutting into tapes which are used as form-in-place gaskets. This is distinct from the claimed methods wherein a length of tape is wound for multiple rotations or windings around a die at an increasing distance around the die outer diameter to form a spiral or coil, and each rotation is joined by an alternating rotation of an air impermeable material. A gasket formed by the method of Hisano would not result in at least two continuous windings of an ePTFE tape around a gasket inner periphery alternating with windings of an air impermeable layer at an increasing distance from the inner periphery of the gasket.

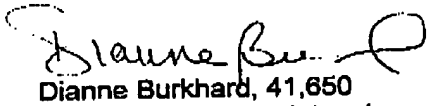
Claims 8-10, 30-32, 50, 51, 59, and 60 are rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hisano. Claims 15-17 and 36-38 are rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hisano in view of Mortimer. Each of these claims is dependent upon currently pending independent claims, either directly or indirectly, containing all of the limitations of the independent claims. Whereas the independent claims are deemed patentable for the reasons set forth above, the dependent claims are also deemed patentable. Removal of the rejections to the claims is respectfully requested.

Applicant respectfully requests entry of the amendments to claims 1, 48, 56, and 73 presented herewith. Claims 6, 63, and 75 are being cancelled in the instant amendment, without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present invention as defined by claims 1-81 is neither taught nor suggested by any of the references of record. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that these claims are now in form for allowance. If further questions remain, Applicant requests that the Examiner telephone applicant's undersigned representative before issuing a further Office Action.

Respectfully submitted,



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